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Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks



The Newsletter of Region One

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Living in Bear Country

Prevention rather than correction advised for people living in wildlife habitat

It's been a tough year for bears in northwest Montana.

FWP Game Damage Specialist Erik Wenum has captured and worked more than 50 black bears this year. Grizzly Bear Management Specialist Tim Manley has handled or worked more than 15 grizzlies. Together, the two bear experts and wardens across the region have received hundreds and hundreds of calls from residents reporting other bear sightings around their homes.

Sadly, most of these problems relate to bears getting fed by people living in bear habitat. Most of the feeding is unintentional, but some may be deliberate.

Feeding bears is dangerous

Manley says that some residents may put out corn or three-way grain for deer and wild turkeys; then bears show up. They like to see the bears so they continue feeding.

"These residents are essentially teaching bears to come to houses to eat," says Manley.

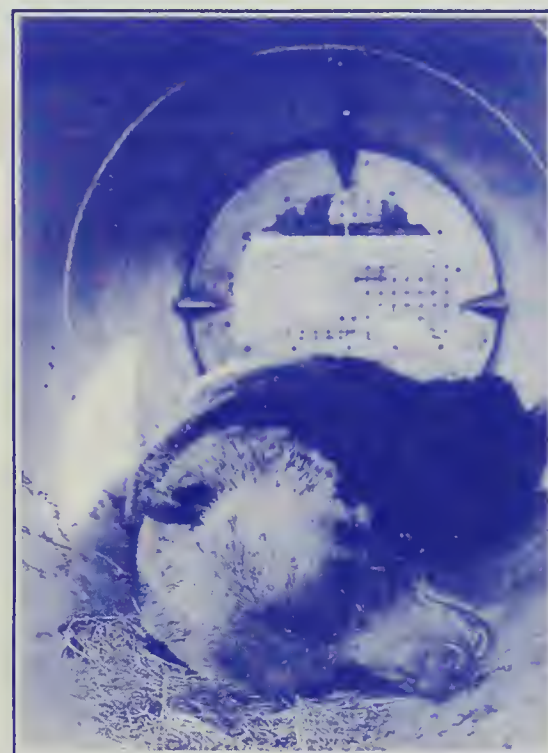
Many bears, says Manley, switch from natural foods and do not return to them whether or not it's a good berry year. "It's so easy for them to get their calories from this human-related food source that they stop seeking natural foods like huckleberries," he says. "In a poor berry year like this one, attractants draw in bears who don't normally get into trouble."

Once some bears learn to use this easy food source, they return the next year to populated areas rather than seeking natural foods in the mountains. "Instead of going to Tom-Tom Lake in the Jewel Basin to eat huckleberries, they go to the valley to eat corn, oats and barley," says Manley.

Bears who learn to obtain food from areas around houses become bolder over time. "Pretty soon the bear is looking into windows or trying to enter your house or your neighbor's house," Manley says.

Bears that obtain food rewards through intentional feeding or unintentional feeding (obtaining unsecured garbage, pets, fowl, livestock or livestock feed) are referred to as food conditioned. "Once a bear gets to that point, it's usually too late to keep it in the wild because of public safety concerns. If moved, the bear usually gets in trouble somewhere else or returns to the original site. So the bear almost always ends up dead.


(Cont. on Page 2)



THIS 6-YEAR OLD MALE GRIZZLY was captured and euthanized after it obtained food rewards. Bear managers point out that bears which obtain foods at residences usually end up dead.

Feeding Bears May be Illegal

Flathead County Attorney Tom Esch points out that deliberate feeding of bears may violate one or more state statutes including: 45-8-111: Public Nuisance: "A condition which endangers safety or health, is offensive to the senses, or obstructs the free use of property so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property by an entire community or neighborhood..." and 45-5-207: Criminal Endangerment.

Knowingly feeding a grizzly bear resulting in the eventual death of the grizzly may also fall under the "taking" provision of the Endangered Species Act. 

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FREE COPY

PLEASE HELP YOURSELF

(Cont. from Page 1)

Manley says that people who feed bears or allow bears to obtain food usually don't see it as a problem to them. But in reality they are creating a dangerous situation for themselves, their neighbors, and the bear.

Land settlement patterns make management difficult

FWP Wildlife Manager Harvey Nyberg points out that even if people

don't allow bears to obtain food rewards, there will still be conflicts because of the settlement pattern in northwest Montana.

"People have moved into the forests, valleys, and foothills which traditionally have been wildlife habitat," says Nyberg. "These areas are key habitats for certain species at certain times of the year."

Nyberg gives the example of spring habitat needs for bears. Bears natu-

rally come into the lower foothills and valley bottoms in the spring because that's where the green-up first occurs. Valley bottoms are also traditional deer winter ranges, and deer attract mountain lions.

"We are going to see ongoing conflicts with humans and wildlife; it's not going away," Nyberg says. He adds that the turnover of residents affects education efforts on living with wildlife. "New people are moving in all the time who don't have experience with

FWP's management policy for bear incidents

When FWP bear managers respond to calls about bears at residences, they consider a number of variables, including:

- **Immediate Public Safety Concern:** Does this bear represent an immediate threat to public safety? If so, managers travel to the site as soon as possible and attempt to remove the bear.

Options include: capture using a baited culvert trap, tranquilizer dart, or as a last resort, lethal removal using a firearm.

After the action, the resident and neighbors are counseled and asked to remove and secure any attractants in the area.

Depending on the history of the bear and its level of food conditioning, the bear may be relocated in the wild, placed in a zoo (rarely available), or euthanized.

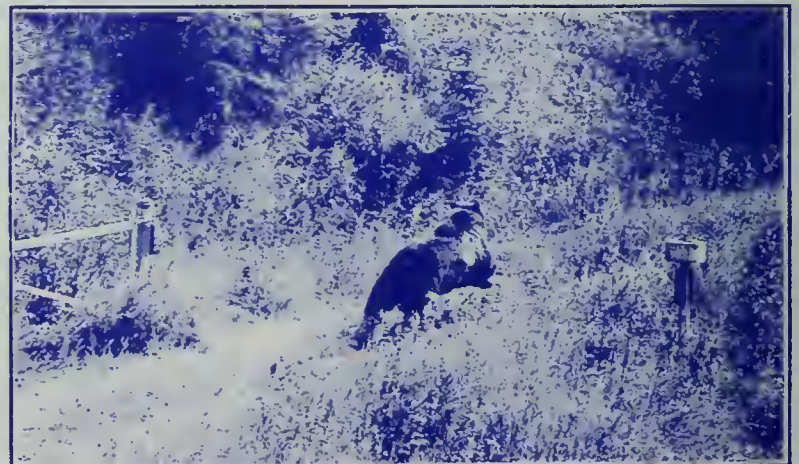
- **Prevention of further problems:** If the bear is not an immediate public safety concern, more options are available.

First, managers work with landowners to secure attractants like fowl, livestock, livestock feed, pet food, garbage, and wildlife feed. An effective option being used more and more is aversive conditioning. Using this technique managers employ rubber bullets, cracker shells, bean bag rounds, and Karelian bear dogs to haze bears out of the area and give bears negative impressions of people and residences.

Depending on the situation and the bear's age and sex, the bear may be captured, marked, and released on site with a full dose of aversive conditioning. Sometimes the bear is released at a distance away from the site. Monitoring is an important part of this approach. 🐾



THE "OLNEY FEMALE" grizzly exits a culvert trap in a remote area east of Hungry Horse Reservoir.



THE BEAR DASHES for the brush under a barrage of rubber bullets and cracker shells. Managers then followed the bear's path with four Karelian Bear Dogs. The grizzly had been obtaining fowl, chicken feed, garbage, and food from several residences near Olney and had already undergone one capture and on-site release. This second release far from the capture site was a last-ditch effort to avoid removing the bear from the wild.

wildlife issues in our area and have not been exposed to educational messages about how to prevent problems," he says.

Nyberg adds that the most effective education efforts are one-on-one contacts with residents. Unfortunately, new residents sometimes wait until they have a direct conflict with wildlife before contacting FWP.

Prevention is the Key

Although conflicts between bears and people can't be completely avoided,

managers agree that many things can be done to prevent a large share of the problem. Manley advises all rural residents to take an inventory of their possible attractants—such as garbage, pet and livestock food storage, bird feeders, fruit trees—and take steps to make these attractants completely unavailable to wildlife. To keep these attractants from bears, the items must be stored securely out of reach and out of the range of smell of the animals. This takes careful planning and

thought.

For example, Manley advises electric fencing on livestock, beehives, and fowl operations. He advises residents to pick up copies of the brochures, "Living with Montana Mountain Lions," "Living with Grizzlies," and other living with wildlife brochures at FWP and U.S. Forest Service offices. Manley is also available to consult with residents who would like advice and help in securing their attractants. 🐾

More about Karelian Bear Dogs

(courtesy of Carrie Hunt, Wind River Bear Institute)

Pedigreed pepper spray? Bear bells with a bark? Bear biologist Carrie Hunt and her team of Karelian Bear Dogs are working from Alaska to Montana to Yosemite to develop the "Partners in Life" program. The program's goal is to reduce conflicts between bears and people. The program uses specialized bear dogs in combination with other aversive conditioning techniques to modify bear behavior.

Hunt raises, selects, and trains the bear dogs to serve as partners for people who live, work, or play in bear country, and for agency folks concerned with managing bears. Most importantly, the dogs and

handlers teach bears to behave in a manner which does not conflict with humans.

After becoming interested in using dogs to deter and repel bears, Hunt found a breed that seemed perfect for the task: the Karelian Bear Dog. A dog unknown to most parts of the world, Karelians have been bred for centuries by grizzly bear hunters and farmers in Finland and western Russia. Just as Border Collies have an instinct for moving sheep, the 40-60-pound black and white Karelians have an instinct for handling bears safely. Hunt has worked with Karelians for more than 7 years with out-

standing success.

Hunt has loaned her expertise to Montana bear experts Tim Manley and Erik Wenum. Both managers now own Karelians and have experienced good success in using their dogs to modify bear behavior.

Hunt has pioneered other bear management techniques such as pepper spray, and the use of rubber bullets and cracker shells. Ultimately she hopes that many bears which would have been killed under past management techniques can be saved through the proper application of these aversive conditioning techniques. 🐾



REDUCING CONFLICT. Carrie Hunt and Tim Manley rely on their Karelian Bear Dogs to help manage bears which conflict with humans in northwest Montana.



WIND RIVER ASSOCIATES Jeff Benkosky and Angela Klinefelter hazed a female grizzly before it was released from a culvert trap recently.

Anglers with Disabilities Have Fishing Trip of Lifetime

Over the Labor Day weekend nine anglers with disabilities had the river fishing opportunity of a lifetime.

On September 6, a group of guides and others hosted the anglers on a fly fishing float trip on the Flathead River. The guides provided boats, fishing gear, and expertise as they tutored the anglers on a sunny, 5 hour trip on the clear waters of one of Montana's most beautiful rivers.

Event Organizer Dave Girardot says that all the guides had a great time. "They all want to do it again," he says, pointing out that next year's event is already scheduled for the last Saturday in August. "They were excited to be able to help these folks enjoy fly fishing."

"The guides were great," says angler and FWP Crossing the Barriers Committee member Tim Brubaker. "They got us to where the fish were, told us where to cast. We couldn't hook all the fish, but we tried."

In fact, the anglers landed and released about 40 cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and whitefish. Jack Anderson, a 79-year old cancer patient, said it was his only chance to fly fish. Anderson had been an avid fly angler for 50 years but his illness has kept him off the water. Anderson caught a number of westslope cutthroat and rainbow on the float.

Several young anglers also took part in the trip. Fourteen year-old Matt Sather of Bigfork received fly fishing instruction from Tom Hope. Sather picked up the technique quickly, catching a number of trout and a 2-1/2 pound mountain whitefish. Two young women who attend high school received tips and encouragement from their guide through a sign language interpreter. Both young ladies caught fish.

Big League Bagel of Kalispell provided lunches for the anglers. The guides provided folding picnic tables and chairs for the anglers as they enjoyed their shoreline lunch.

Crossing the Barriers Committee Chairman Jerry Howard was beaming after the trip. "What a beautiful day on a beautiful river," Howard said. "Everyone had such a great time; it was really a special experience."

And what would a fishing trip be

without a big fish story? As usual the anglers had one. Tim Brubaker claims, and his guide Bob Elias confirms, that a 4 or 5 pound rainbow slashed his fly and broke off a 5x leader. "Bob said it was the biggest fish he's seen on this river stretch."

Sure guys, we believe you. 🐟

Those Who Helped

Guides who made possible the fishing float on the Flathead River include:

Steve Thompson: owner, Lakestream Fly Shop

Ron Eckert: owner of Loose Ends Upholstery

Bob Elias: independent professional guide working with Wild River Adventures of West Glacier

Tom Hope: independent professional guide

Dave Girardot: independent professional guide, and event coordinator. Dave also thanks his co-workers for providing various supplies for the trip

People who helped shuttle rigs included Stephanie Pine, Jill and Brad Nikunen, Ron and Ann Romera, Sharon Thompson and Ernie Thureno. 🐟



A WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT caught and released by Tim Brubaker on the river float.

RIVER GUIDE Tom Hope takes anglers Matt Sather (left) and Jerry Howard down the Flathead River. Sather and Howard caught and released about 14 fish on the 5-hour float.



Groups Host Fishing Day for Kids

The Kids in Motion Group and FWP's Crossing the Barriers Committee hosted a fishing day for about 30 kids with disabilities at Lawrence Park on August 12. At the event, kids used spinning rods to catch rainbow trout from tanks donated by Cenex of Kalispell.

Each child was able to catch a few trout and get them cleaned,

bagged, and put on ice to take home. For many of the kids, it was their first chance to catch a fish, or their only chance this year to fish. Parents enjoyed helping their children pull in the scrappy rainbows which averaged over a pound each.

Hatchery workers from FWP's Arlee Hatchery hauled the rainbow trout to the event. After the young-

sters were done fishing, they were treated to a barbecue lunch provided by Kids in Motion, a fundraising group for children with developmental disabilities. Gay Moddrell of the Special Friends Advocacy Program was the main event organizer.

"The looks on the faces of the kids as they pulled in their fish really told the story," she said. 🐟



HELPING OUT. Above, FWP's Fisheries Manager Jim Vashro assists a young angler at the Special Friends Fishing Day at Lawrence Park.



SOMETHING TO GRIN ABOUT. Tim Brubaker of FWP's Crossing the Barriers Committee helps a youngster celebrate his catch of a rainbow trout.



HAPPY ANGLERS. The youngsters in the two pictures at left were among those who were pleased with their catches. For some of the kids, it was their first chance to catch a fish.

Lincoln County Hosts Advanced Hunter Educ. Camp

With the cooperation of Libby Rod and Gun Club, FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker, and the Libby Community, the 1998 advanced hunter education day camp was another big success. The camp, held August 15 this year, attracted 28 boys and girls age 12-14 who have already completed

the standard Hunter Education Course.

The advanced course features seven stations where students receive detailed instruction on shooting, hunter ethics, survival, and other topics. Students spend 12 hours at the Fawn Creek Campground taking part in instruction, lunch, and a special

barbecue featuring a number of presentations.

A number of instructors made the event fun and informative for the students. Stations and instructors included:

Rifle Shooting: Don Clark, Pat McKay, Frank Sichting, John Basham
Hunter Ethics: Dave Helmdrick, Steve Anderson

Black Powder: Kootenai Muzzleloaders, John McBride, Mark Morain

Bow: Rich Hjort, Kurt Spencer, Libby Archery Club


Survival: David Thompson Search and Rescue, Libby

Map and Compass: Mike Canavan

Wildlife: Jerry Brown, Gene Miller

Linda Alkire did a wonderful job with food preparation. Businesses and individuals who contributed included: Timberline Auto, Snyders Bread, McDonalds, Rosauers, Libby Sports, Treasure Mountain Casino, Charlie Decker, Plum Creek Timber, Highline Sports.

A number of prizes were donated for the students. David Cadwallader won a .22 rifle donated by FWP Commissioner Charlie Decker; Taylor Sweet won a Montana Outdoors vest donated by FWP; Josh Flack won a fanny pack. The girls' team won the hunter education jeopardy game and were awarded orange hunting vests.

Tom Horelick of the Libby Rod and Gun Club was the overall coordinator. "Businesses and individuals have been incredibly supportive," Horelick said. "They recognize the value of responsible hunting." 



TEACHING ETHICS. GAME Warden Steve Anderson instructs students at the Hunter Ethics Station.



SAFETY FIRST. Instructor Don Clark prepares students at the rifle firing station.

1998 Montana Big Game Seasons

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Antelope (archery) | Sept. 5 - Oct. 10 |
| Antelope (gun) | Oct. 11 - Nov. 8 |
| Black Bear | Apr. 15 - May 31 |
| and | Sept. 15 - Nov. 29 |
| Deer/Elk (archery) | Sept. 5 - Oct. 18 |
| Deer/Elk (backcountry) | Sept. 15 - Nov. 29 |
| Deer/Elk (gun) | Oct. 25 - Nov. 29 |
| Goat | Sept. 1 - Nov. 29 |
| Lion | Dec. 1 - April 14, 1999 |
| and Region One (100 series districts) | Oct. 25 - Nov. 29 |
| Moose | Sept. 15 - Nov. 29 |
| Sheep | Sept. 8 - Nov. 29 |

If you would like comprehensive details on a wide variety of recreation topics, you may choose to call our 1-900 Hotline. Cost is \$1.50 per minute/caller must be at least 18 years. 1-900-225-5397.

1998 Montana Upland Bird Seasons

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Grouse, Sage | Sept. 1 - Nov. 1 |
| Grouse, Mountain & Sharptail | Sept. 1 - Dec. 15 |
| Partridge | Sept. 1 - Dec. 15 |
| Pheasant | Oct. 10 - Dec. 15 |
| Turkey, Spring | April 11 - May 10 |
| Turkey, Fall | Sept. 1 - Dec. 15 |

1998 Montana Fishing Seasons

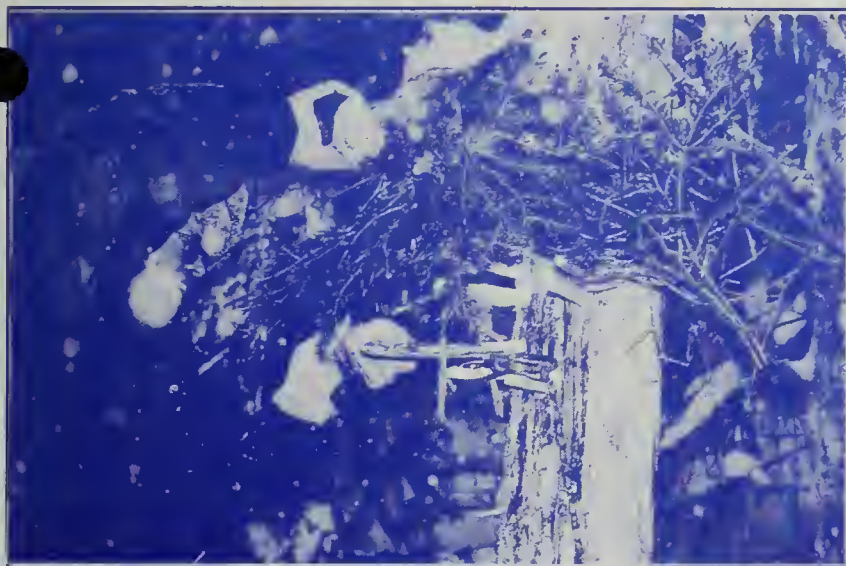
| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Rivers** & Streams | May 16 - Nov. 29 |
| Lakes | Open entire year |

Seasons for some hunting or water districts may vary from those listed here. Check the regulations for specifics.

Montana Fish
Wildlife & Parks



New Regulations in Place for 1998 Trapping Season




A TRAPPER EXAMINES a no-trace set made for pine marten in the backcountry of northwest Montana.

Youth Trapper License Available

A great way for youngsters to start learning responsibility in the outdoors is to take part in trapping with their parents or other responsible adult.

Montana offers a special youth trapping license for youngsters 6-12 years of age. The license costs \$3; also required is a \$4 conservation license.

The youth trapper license enables the youngster to trap the classified furbearers mink and muskrat. Youngsters may go along with an adult on any trapline. 



Trappers should keep in mind several new regulations for the 1998 trapping season. According to FWP Furbearer Coordinator Brian Giddings, the new rules were passed to improve cooperation between trappers, other recreational users and landowners.

The FWP Commission took extensive comments during the process to set these new regulations. The Commission also referred to guidelines which have been recommended in other states.

Here are the text of the new rules as they will appear in the 1998 Montana Trapping Regulations.

New Regulations


Landowner Permission—Resident trappers must obtain permission of the landowner, lessee or their agent before trapping on private land. Nonresidents must obtain written permission from the landowner, lessee or their agent before trapping or snaring predatory animals and nongame wildlife on private property (MCA Sec. 87-2-604).

It is unlawful to set snares on private property without landowner permission (MCA Sec. 87-3-107). Snares must be set in a manner and at a time so as not to duly endanger livestock. A trapper who injures livestock in a snare is liable for damage and this constitutes a misdemeanor.

Right-of-Way—Trapping is prohibited on the right of way of publicly maintained roads.

Conibear Ground Sets—On public or private land ground sets using 220 or 330 conibear traps must have the trap trigger recessed a minimum of seven (7) inches within a secure enclosure that provides openings no greater than fifty (50) square inches each.

Conibear Setbacks—When using body gripping landset trap 220 or larger, a setback of 50 yards from the approximate centerline of public roads is required.

Bobcat Chasing Hours—See specific regulation under the bobcat portion of the 1998 regulations. 

Parks Manager Focuses on People

FWP's Region One Parks Manager Marty Watkins loves working with people. And her skill with people was one of the reasons Watkins was promoted this summer from Parks Operations Specialist to the lead Parks position for northwest Montana.

"I love working with the public," Watkins says. "I like to see people from different user groups find common ground and come together on solutions."

That's exactly what Watkins helped accomplish with the management plan for the Thompson Chain of Lakes west of Kalispell. Known for her warmth and enthusiasm, Watkins represented



FWP in a long process which brought a number of user groups and area landowners together to plan the future of the area. An excellent plan for the state's largest fishing access site resulted from the effort.

Watkins has a high regard for the Parks staff in Region One. "All I have to do is stay out of the way and things operate smoothly," she says.

Her main priorities for park management include maintaining top quality park sites, and providing friendly service for park visitors. Watkins welcomes input on park management. She can be reached at FWP, 752-5501. 📞



For more information on Fish, Wildlife & Parks issues, listen to:

"Northwest Outdoors,"

FWP's weekly radio show, Thursdays at 8:35 a.m.
on KGEZ, 600 AM.

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